

TESTIMONY OF MG ALLEN E. TACKETT
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON
GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today on issues that I believe are of vital importance to our nation as a whole and to each of our states.

As demonstrated recently in the response to Hurricane Katrina, the National Guard is vital to recovery efforts following natural disasters. In West Virginia, the National Guard has responded to 37 federally declared disasters in the last ten years. The soldiers and airmen of the army and air National Guard have become expert at these types of operations.

However, this mission, as vital as it is to the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of this nation, has never been resourced by the federal government with the equipment needed to conduct these missions. All equipment issued to the National Guard is issued on the basis of the National Guard unit's federal warfighting mission. No consideration is given to another, equally important mission of the National Guard, disaster relief. As an example, our 1092d Engineer Battalion was mobilized and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. When the unit returned, its engineer equipment remained in theatre for use by incoming units. When the battalion was called to state active duty by the governor for flood duty shortly after demobilization, it had no end loaders or dump trucks to assist with recovery efforts. We were forced to rent Bobcats to assist the citizens of our state to recover from flooding. I believe that this situation must be addressed before the next hurricane, earthquake or tsunami finds us ill-equipped to respond to a threat as potentially deadly as any enemy attack.

The military has long recognized that preparation for combat in a realistic environment leads to fewer casualties on the battlefield. At the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, and the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, Louisiana, units fight realistic mock battles to prepare them for combat. The result can be seen in our decisive victories in Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. In contrast, Katrina illustrates what a lack of collective training can lead to.

Compare this with the situation when the Ohio River flooded parts of Ohio and West Virginia earlier this year. National Guard units were able to work with state and county emergency services directors, the Red Cross and Noah's Wish to help the citizens of both states in the flooded areas recover in a timely, effective manner.

The lessons of Katrina and Rita demonstrate a clear need for a joint interagency training capability the new Joint Interagency Training Center, established by the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, can provide. We must focus not only on consequence management and emergency response, but just as importantly, on prevention and deterrence. The Joint Interagency Training Center operated by the West Virginia National Guard focuses on key aspects of information and intelligence sharing; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Enhanced collective training exercises focused on interagency and intergovernmental response; critical infrastructure protection and mission assurance; and, in the future, non-lethal weapons. All of these are key elements of homeland defense and homeland security, whether it is preventing or mitigating a terrorist attack, or effectively responding to a catastrophic natural disaster. Just as we use the Joint Readiness Training Center and the National Training Center to be the most effective fighting force in conventional warfare, we need to use the Joint Inter-agency Training Center concept to be the most effective force in the new realm of Homeland Defense, Homeland Security and Emergency

Preparedness. In the new threat environment this is just as vital a mission as any other warfighting mission we have for the "away game". It is clearly a mission for the National Guard, but it must be effectively resourced and supported, and not at the expense of reducing the guard's resources and participation in other warfighting missions. The Chief, National Guard Bureau, in conjunction with the Adjutants General has already laid the ground work for such efforts with initiatives such as the Joint Inter-agency Training Center; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Enhanced Reaction Force; Civil Support Teams; Full Spectrum Integrated Vulnerability Assessment teams and a Rapid Reaction Force. An example of this is the methodology the Joint Inter-agency Training Center-East is developing on behalf of the National Guard Bureau for assessing Critical Infrastructure and Mission Assurance. Working jointly with the Assistant Secretary of Defense-Homeland Defense, the Defense Contract Management Agency and NORTHCOM we are looking at an "all Hazards" approach for making these assessments, thus allowing for identification, mitigation and response planning for not only terrorist threats, but also natural threats.

Each of the States has, or soon will have, a Civil Support Team on duty as a part of its National Guard force structure. The purpose of the Civil Support Team is to respond to chemical, biological or nuclear attacks and to determine what agents have been used and to work with civilian first responders in consequence management. I propose an expansion of the Civil Support Team mission to include natural disaster response. Civil Support Teams are already trained in first aid and casualty evacuation. This type of approach would have dedicated forces in place, ready to respond quickly when needed. The major criticism of the relief effort after Katrina was the perceived length of time it took to get troops on the ground. The states and counties are responsible for providing first responders. FEMA does not have a first responder mission, nor does any other federal agency. A dedicated force of National Guard first responders would reduce the time from the call for help to having boots on the ground.

In addition, in 1989 Congress had the foresight to establish the National Guard Counterdrug program. It provided additional force structure for Guard soldiers to work in an interagency approach to fighting the war on drugs. It uses a "state plans" approach that tailors efforts to the specific threats of each state and also allows for states to develop multiple state initiatives. This program has been a model for interagency and intergovernmental support for over 15 years. It could be rapidly expanded at minimal cost to the broader Homeland Defense, Homeland Security, and Emergency Preparedness mission. In fact, many of its assets have been used in key events such as the response to Katrina and Rita as well as the National political conventions, G8 Summit and the Presidential Inauguration. The model is there, it just needs the authorization for the expanded role and full funding of its current 4000 troop authorization. It could become the core of a dedicated force for both the narco-terrorism and Homeland Defense/Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness missions that are then augmented by traditional Guard, Reserve and Active Component units depending on the scope of an event. If properly structured and resourced these units could also provide assets for key OCONUS response in training allies for Homeland Defense as well as humanitarian and nation building missions.

In my view, funding for disaster recovery operations conducted by the National Guard should come directly from the federal government. Statutory authority to fund homeland security missions is now in place with the recently enacted Chapter 9 of Title 32, United States Code. This statute allows the secretary of defense to fund homeland security missions at the request of a governor for 180 days. An amendment to this statute to provide similar authority to fund disaster relief efforts is badly needed.

There has been some discussion of adding a disaster response mission to our active forces. I believe this would be a mistake. Our active component forces are the finest in the world. One of the

reasons they are so good is their focus solely on preparedness for war. Adding another mission would detract from the single-minded focus required of the forces whose primary mission always has been, and should remain, fighting our nation's war. In addition, the current OPTEMPO makes adding another mission to our active duty forces unwise, if not impossible. The primary military responsibility for natural disaster relief should rest with the National Guard.

As a member of both the National Guard Bureau Domestic Operations Advisory Board and the Adjutants General Association of the United States Homeland Security Committee I can tell you the National Guard Bureau and The Adjutants General stand ready to work with Congress, the President and the Department of Defense to quickly and effectively address this vital need. With the threats we face in the 21st century, this mission is too vital to the safety and security of our nation not to address immediately and the Guard, in its role as the militia is clearly the core force for this mission.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.